



SCENE FROM THE RECENT PAGEANT AT BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

The English have been running to historic outdoor pageants recently with great enthusiasm. Our picture depicts the arrival of King Henry and Queen Margaret in the garden of the beautiful old Benedictine abbey.

—The Sphere.

PAGEANTITIS.

A New Disease Which Is Epidemic in England.

By Barry Pain.

Pageantitis has been very prevalent in this island of late. It has broken out in many spots, and more are expected. In theory the pageant is quite lovely. It recites our ancient glories, the paths of history by which we reached our present eminence. It reminds us of these things—"lest we forget, lest we forget." This grateful pride is not without its dignity. Then, again, there is the genial, co-operative spirit awakened in the many inhabitants who take part in the show or help to prepare dresses and properties. In more than one instance, thanks to pageantry, a family has actually drunk the tea of the other family which previously it has sedulously avoided and despised. It is no small achievement to persuade so many people to give so much time and labor, not for any money reward, nor even directly for their personal fame, but to celebrate the history of their native place.

But there is possibly another side to the shield. To begin with, there is the question of the weather. Dr. Johnson when he was told that a widower whose previous marriage had been unsuccessful had married again observed that it was the triumph of hope over experience. There must be something of the triumph of hope over experience in any man who devises an out-of-door entertainment in England during and after the present disastrous summer. I should doubt if anything is more calculated to depress human spirits than a thoroughly wet pageant. Whatever historical scenes may be represented the spectator sees nothing but good men struggling against adversity. He is saturated with rain and sympathy when he should be thrilled with glory.

Already, at Sherborne, at Warwick and at Oxford thousands of law-abiding citizens have for the first time in their lives appeared in public in something closely resembling a theatrical performance. This is a serious matter. These people have tasted blood. An alarming spread of amateur theatricals is sure to be found among the sequels of pageantitis. The young man who has once been Hotspur, and dressed accordingly, is not going to stop at that. To catch the 9-15 a. m. with regularity and spend the day in the office of a solicitor or a stock broker will be too tame and cold for him. I doubt if even amateur theatricals will satisfy him for long. He will help to overcrowd an already overcrowded profession. Then, again, how is the master of

the pageant to cast so many parts without awakening jealousy? Will the woman who in her own opinion and in the opinion of her relatives ought to have been Mary Queen of Scots remain afterward on the same friendly terms with the woman who supplanted her? One would not expect the master of a pageant to be able to get out of the celebrating town alive. Yet, in one instance, at any rate, he not only got out of the town alive but received every mark of the enthusiastic admiration and gratitude of the citizens. This, however, does not prove that rancor and jealousy do not arise. It only proves that in one instance the office of master of a pageant absorbed abilities which would have brought distinction and success to their owner in the diplomatic service. The man who can be master of a pageant may be master of anything.

The master of a pageant in addition to his artistic qualities must have the courage of a lion, the cunning of a serpent and the patience of a spider. In spite of this, and in spite of the risks from jealousies and amateur theatricals, I think the local pageant should depend for its performers upon local people. The importation of a star is likely to turn the rest of the pageant into a background. Professional talent is, for instance, required for the representation of Lady Godiva. Forthwith we read in the papers day by day interesting scraps of information about the professional performer who is generously giving her services. Either she will wear a chestnut wig and ride on a white horse, or she will wear a white wig and ride on a chestnut horse. I did know which it was once, because I saw it in the newspapers, but I have forgotten. I have also been informed where she will get as much costume as the impersonation requires, and why she has given up riding on Wimbledon Common. These things do not make for illusion, and they do assign too much importance to the impersonation, necessarily inadequate, of Lady Godiva. The charm of the pageant is that it should be the product of local enthusiasm. The less it is redolent of the theatre or the circus the better we shall like it. The note of sincerity is needed if the thing is to have any real value. The control must, of course, be in the hands of some man who is competent to invent and control, and he may not be found locally, but the performers and workers of the pageant should be local.

We shall not see the end of pageantitis just at present. These things are likely to take a more virulent form as they go on. When the pageant begins to be used as a means of advertisement for holiday resorts, as will probably happen, then it will be time enough to take the thing in hand. In the mean time, with all its drawbacks, it provides an innocent occupation for a great number of people who are learning that to entertain is to be entertained, and that to please is to be pleased.—Black and White.



PUCCINI IN MOTORING COSTUME.

Signor Giacomo Puccini, the famous composer, is a keen sportsman. At his home at Torre del Lago he shoots, goes motor boating and motoring. Has not been a motorist many years, but has already broken a leg, a feat he accomplished four years ago, and during the recovery from which he was wheeled daily to his piano and schemed the music of "Madama Butterfly."

—Illustrated London News.



CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS.

From a painting by Tom Moutyn, which is attracting considerable attention in London just now.

—Illustrated London News.

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